



January 27, 2014

RE: ALDF SUPPORTS SB 285 & 286

Dear Chairman Heise & Members of the House Criminal Justice Committee,

My name is Chris Green and I am the Director of Legislative Affairs at the Animal Legal Defense Fund, a national organization of attorneys working to protect the lives and advance the interests of animals through the legal system. I also am Chair-Elect of the American Bar Association's Animal Law Committee.

ALDF enjoys a nationwide membership of over 100,000 contributing supporters, many of whom reside in the State of Michigan. It is on their behalf that I write to express our strong support for the animal cruelty penalty enhancements contained in SB 285 & 286, and to respectfully request that you report these bills with favorable recommendations.

In addition to the obvious societal benefit of curbing future harm to helpless animals, volumes of scientific evidence now verify a direct link between the criminal abuse of companion animals and subsequent violence against women, children and the elderly. For this reason, animal abuse is one of the four primary indicators F.B.I. profilers use to assess future violent behavior. Indeed, one 20-year study confirmed that convicted animal abusers are five times more likely to be arrested for committing violent crimes against humans.

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Another analysis found that in homes where children were physically abused, 88 percent of the time the family dog or cat also had been harmed. And women abused by their domestic partners are 10 times more likely to report that the partner also hurt or killed one of their beloved pets. Given this profound correlation of criminal conduct, creating a distinct level of specific intent crimes for those seek to control domestic partners by harming companion animals is a key way to help protect Michigan's other vulnerable populations from harm.

The issue of animal hoarding is also a grave concern given that in just two hoarding cases in which ALDF intervened in North Carolina, a staggering 500 animals had to be rescued and cared for. And such care is not cheap—in just one recent Ohio hoarding case, the price tag to the local county for rescuing and treating the 170 animals removed *from a single home* was over \$1.2 million! When one considers that 80% of animal hoarders are likely to repeat their behavior, anything a state can do to increase penalties for mass cases of abuse only makes sound fiscal sense and strong social policy.

Sincerely,

Christopher Green
Director of Legislative Affairs
Animal Legal Defense Fund

Winning the case against cruelty

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